Chapter 12
ICT for Development in Nigeria:
Towards an Alignment With ICT4D 2.0 Goals

Olumide B. Longe
Caleb University, Nigeria

Adefolarin A. Bolaji
Purdue University, USA

Richard Boateng
University of Ghana, Ghana

ABSTRACT

Prior studies have x-rayed the potentials and impetus for development that can be resultant from a full scale adoption of ICT in Africa particularly in Nigeria. Current challenges relating to infrastructures, cybercrime, government policies and so on that mitigate the benefits accruable from a virile ICT growth have also been highlighted. However, research also needs to really address possible areas of developmental benefit of ICT to rural target groups such as farmers, extension officers, health and social workers This paper explores possible alignment of ICT4D2.0 goals to ICT development in Nigeria. It posited that the digital divide that ICTD1.0 sets to bridge are still very evident at grassroots level. Adding computing and Internet functionality to technologies that already penetrate the grassroots such as mobiles phones, radios and televisions will enhance ICT4D2.0 goals in Nigeria. This will in turn increase productivity among this target group with attendant contribution to national development.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) is a general term referring to the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) within the field of socio-economic development. "ICT4D" as a term is described as a strong and generally positive force. It helps in the magnetization and aggregation of knowledge and practice. It made provision for clear and unambiguous

tag for searching events and material. The "4D" component indicates each activity's purpose. Without it, more loss than gain would be made (Richards, 2016).

ICT4D is geographically unspecific, and as such concerns itself directly with overcoming the barriers of the Digital Divide. It is becoming recognized as an interdisciplinary research field as can be noted by the number of conferences, workshops and publications in the field (UN-ESCWA, 2005; UICT4D, 2007 and SPIDER, 2008). Such research has been motivated by the need for empirical results that can be used to measure the impact of ICT4D initiatives. ICT is recognized by government, organizations, individuals and even criminals as a tool that can be used for varying degrees of achievements.

ICT4D can therefore be applied either in an indirect sense, where the ICTs assist aid organizations or non-governmental organizations or governments in order to improve socio-economic conditions or in the direct sense, where their use directly benefits the disadvantaged population in some manner. The former was more of the focus of ICT4D1.0 while ICT4D2.0 is expected to achieve the laudable goals of pragmatic and penetrative development at all levels. Unfortunately, government bureaucracy, lack of basic infrastructures, inadequate publicity, legislative and other political bottlenecks have hampered the rate of growth and penetration of ICT and its attendant development potentials in most developing countries.

On the one hand, developing countries present problems that are as diverse as the cultures they encompass, and the issues fully emerge only with direct interaction with the target communities. On the other hand, many of the issues are recurring, and they often are just minor variations of challenges encountered in the developed world (Kentayo and Benadi, 2008). Developers have identified the root of several ICT4D failures as stemming from their technocentric approach, dominated by an informatics view of the world. Such projects are frequently analogous with the old medical joke, "The operation was a success but unfortunately the patient died." They deliver a system that works technically but that fails to make a developmental contribution. To move away from the inadequacies of ICT4D 1.0, then, we must have new, broader worldviews guiding ICT4D 2.0 projects. These broader worldviews will likely come from two main disciplinary candidates: Information Systems (IS) and development studies (Longe, et al., 2007; Longe & Chiemeke, 2007a, 2007b and Richard, 2008). Increasing availability and access to ICT is very important if ICT4D2.0 is to make any meaningful contribution in Nigeria.

Development of ICT in Nigeria

The first Information and Communication Technology (ICT) initiative in Nigeria started in the 1950s with focus on print and electronic media. No major policy or other outcome was achieved because of strict government control. The full awareness of the importance of ICTs was absent. Only the private sector demonstrated ICT initiatives. The Federal Government of Nigeria has recognized the import of information technology as a major key to economic growth and sustainability. That culminated in a workshop on ICT policy in Abuja in March 2000 which brought together major ICT stakeholders such as the Nigerian Computer Society (NCS), IT Association of Nigeria (ITAN), the Computer Professionals of Nigeria (CPN) and other major stakeholders in the public and the private sector. These days, many conferences and workshops hold at different venues in Nigeria discussing the diffusion, penetration and growth of ICT in the nation.

With the collaboration of several committees, the ICT final draft of the National Information and Communication Technology proposal was approved by the Federal Government of Nigeria (National ICT Policy, 2012; Ahiakwo, 2002). According to its vision statement, the policy is aimed at making Nigeria an IT capable country in Africa and a key player in the information society by using ICT as the

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